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EXECUTIVE AND PERSONNEL
MANAGEMENT
ON THE
NATIONAL FORESTS



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A MEDIUM FOR THE EXCHANGE OF IDEAS AND
EXPERIENCES BY OPERATING EXECUTIVES
FOR THE BETTERMENT OF THE
SERVICE

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THE PLOW AND HORSE ON LARGE FIRES

BY W. W. WHITE, REGION 1

Trenching, as one of the necessary steps in the suppression of a forest fire, was not in universal use the first few years after the Forest Service took over the administration of the National Forests. The trench digging complex developed with and by fire inspection. The dug ring around the fire standard attained its greatest popularity and refinement between 1917 and 1926. Since that time the number of anti-trench heretics has been steadily increasing. By 1928 and 1929 men were daring to omit the ditch on stretches of fire line and to check the fire first and dig in afterwards. Fire control was being speeded up by the omission of a lot of digging.

But old ideas, superstitions and practices die hard. We now find the one hundred per cent trenchers well barricaded behind two hundred plows, one hundred big plow horses and a group of plow enthusiasts, who are not themselves believers in the deep, wide and polished trench.

Many figures and words have been spoken and written recently about the use of plows in fighting forest fires. A few of these statements sound a bit like some of the paid for extravagant experience claims for Luckies and Fleishmans Yeast. However, the main claim, that a plow, two horses, a driver and 2 plow shakers can do the work of 25 to 30 men at trench building is correct. But that is not all of the story. If fighting fire were as simple as merely driving a horse hitched to a plow along a cleared right of way, I would have to put in with the plow boys.

The following are some of the disadvantages of the plow:

1. It is not as versatile and mobile as a trenching crew equipped with Pulaskis and shovels. For example: A spot fire across the line 300 yards behind the clearing gang, starts up suddenly in a jungle. Ten men from the trenching crew can get there and control the fire in a hurry. The plow is helpless until a detail from the clearing gang can come back and cut out a right of way.

2. The plow cannot do much to check dangerously hot places. The trench gang can cool with dirt, scatter fuel or perhaps carry some water.

3. The plow cannot hot spot, cold trail, use the direct method of attack, mop up or whatever you call it when you hit a fairly quiet stretch of line and just go in and kill the fire right now. Men can.

4. The investment in plows and plow horses in this Region for fire suppression purposes is about \$25,000. The annual depreciation and maintenance cost will exceed \$5,000 and may amount to \$10,000. I do not know, nobody knows, how many of these plow outfits are really ready, but I will venture to say that not far from fifty per cent of these horses would be useless on a fire tomorrow because of disposition or poor physical condition due largely to lack of work.

5. This happened on a large fire in 1931. The crack plow crew of the Region was there. Width of right-of-way clearing was three feet at the start but had to be widened to six feet on account of the plow. This did not double the work of clearing, but did slow up the clearing gang by

30 to 40 per cent.

6. Often the fire line is located to take advantage of a small stream, a cliff or a rock slide. A special trail must frequently be cut around these places for the horse and plow which is extra work.

7. Many of us commonly leave fair sized to large sound logs across the fire line. Such are easily made safe. It saves time. Cannot do much of this with horse and plow.

8. With the plow there is a tendency to straighten line and keep just a little farther away from the fire. As a rule the farther the line is from the fire the more it costs to hold it and the more danger there is of losing the line. One of the main elements of time or cost in fire line construction is the controlled burning out of fuel between line and the fires edge.

9. The psychology of the trench or furrow is bad. It gives the crew a feeling of security that is unwarranted. It causes the men to let up in their physical work and vigilance. They tend to wait in the trench for the fire to come to them. They delay mop up. All this increases the chances for the fire to get away.

10. Finally and most important of all, what do we want a continuous trench for anyway? It is the clearing gang that makes the break in surface fuels that feed a hot traveling fire. It is the trimming of limbs, throwing dirt with a shovel, scattering piles of fuel, and occasional use of water that cools down hot places and reduces the danger of crown and spot fires. Most of the duff, no matter how deep is slow burning. As a rule it will take hours for fire to burn across the duff in the cleared right-of-way strip where the surface sticks and brush have been removed. A lot of it will go out. The fact that the big majority are now satisfied with a trench four to twelve inches wide is good evidence that the trench is not important or much needed.

It is my opinion:

a. That not more than one-half the perimeter of most big class C fires need ever be trenched.

b. That it is seldom where more than 25 per cent of the perimeter needs trenching in order to corral the fire. I would do most of the trenching as a part of mop up.

c. That for fires in burns less than 30 years old not more than 10 per cent of the perimeter need ever be trenched.

A study was made of a two-mile sector on a large fire on the Cabinet National Forest in 1930. The fire burned up to the edge of the right-of-way clearing on just 13.8 per cent of the two-mile strip. Ninety four per cent of the trench was not needed. The fire never burned to it.

Just recently on the Lolo, on the headwaters of the Lochsa River, a hot 60-acre fire was corralled *without any* plowed or hand made trench.

Not long ago I rode over one mile along the edge of one of last year's fires. The reports from this fire were that plows saved the day and did the work of about 50 men. Over 80 per cent of the furrow that I saw had nothing to do with stopping that fire and might just as well have been a

few hundreds of miles away.

What is my opinion of the plow as a piece of fire fighting equipment? Well, I will be fair. It is a decided improvement over the old hand method for doing a job that need not be done and should not be done.

Queries by a plow enthusiast:

Is the axe also to be condemned as a fire fighting tool because when it is furnished to a fire fighter he often wastes his time by doing unnecessary cutting with it? Is the axe a poor tool because it has no nozzle from which a stream of water can be secured when needed? If I cold trail 94 per cent of the edge of a fire and miss a live spot which creeps out and blows up when no one is watching will the Regional Forester accept my alibi when I tell him that all but 1 foot of the line I cold trailed *stayed* out; also, if I cool the edge down by throwing dirt, clear out the surface stick and brush and then go on to another hot spot where I am later burned out by a fire which crept across where I *didn't* trench and then swept around me, will I have any trouble in satisfying my boss that my procedure was correct?

REVIEWS

Psychology for Executives. By Elliott Dunlap Smith,
Division Manager, Dennison Manufacturing Co., and Lecturer, Harvard
College

This is not a brief of the entire book but an attempt to follow through one line of thought which seems to be somewhat related to the idea back of White's article on plows and trenches.

Psychology, or human nature, if you prefer to call it that, is a study which strives for an understanding of men. Why are they what they are, and how do they respond to their environment? What part of their nature is fixed and what part changes? We say that all men are different and each must be treated according to his nature. To a degree that is true, but if it were the whole truth there could be no systematic management of men in either society or in industry. It is because of the likenesses of men that we are able to know something about them. Human nature infers a common nature.

The outstanding common characteristic with which the executive is concerned is the ability to learn. This means that he is able to acquire qualities and abilities from experience. When a person does a thing in a certain way, he tends to do it again in the same way. This tendency leads to what are commonly called habits or skills. Adults are what they are very largely because of the habits which they have learned.

Habit as here used includes more than is commonly included when we speak of one's habits. It includes not only manual acts and skills such as driving a car but also tastes for food, style in dress, preferences in art and literature as well as our mental responses and judgment. Particularly, from the executives standpoint, does it include our methods of work or getting out of work. The executive who puts off a difficult report because "I'm too tired to do it well", "There isn't time enough to do that properly now" or "This requires special care" is responding to a habit just as much so as the laborer in the shop. We have habits of study, habits of thinking, habits of judgment, habits of courtesy, and habits of rationalizing as well as manual habits such as is necessary in operating a typewriter or in writing longhand.

The executive therefore, finds himself in a continual struggle with habits—his own and those of the men whom he directs. Without habits of considerable stability he could develop no organization, no efficiency, but with too much stability of habit his organization is soon a back number, out of date. Practice makes perfect. But what is perfect today may not be tomorrow. Standard work becomes habitual. Then the standard is changed and new habits must be learned, and the old ones unlearned.

Since habit and the continual remodeling of habit is so important the author gives us a number of rules that will be a help in helping others to develop useful habits or remodel old ones. He also warns us not to apply the rule too flatly but to subordinate it to the end sought:

1. Do not preach—teach by example. Yet preaching is an awful temptation. We all do it. And further, we teach by example whether we

intend it or not. The executive who preaches the use of plans and does not use one will probably find that his example has had more weight than his preaching.

2. Make a vigorous start. This will help to carry one beyond those first dangerous temptations.

3. Provide exercise for the new habit.

4. Prepare for foreseeable temptations.

5. Make its performance as easy as possible and make backsliding difficult.

6. Do not attempt too much.

7. Permit no exception.

8. Correct all transgressions.

9. Prepare for a long and arduous task.

10. Generally in dealing with habit, as with most human problems, intelligent guidance is a much more effective instrument than force. Often the by-products of training are more important than the acts deliberately taught.

Above all things else we must keep alive within us the habit of learning new things. Old habits are tricky, dangerous things. They influence our understanding of what we see and hear. They even influence what we see and hear. Men who are set in their habits of thinking we say are "biased". Such a person interprets everything according to his set rules or habits of thought. What doesn't fit he rejects. You have had experience with such people. You tell them something and they misunderstand. Then you explain carefully step by step, getting their assent to each step, only to find in the end that they swing right back to where they were in the beginning. If bias is not checked it leads to stagnation. The learning capacity hardens. New points of view become increasingly difficult. It is never realized by ones self but is accompanied by complacency. Stagnation is an industrial disease. The executive who remains for years in one position is its particular prey. "Unless a man enriches and develops himself by constantly learning and constantly acquiring and improving habits, his habits, especially his mental habits, tend to master him. It is only by improving and developing habits that he remains master of them."

Were that all, habits would not be so bad or so hard to control. Muscular habits, while tenacious, will yield, but mental habits may affect the whole mechanism. For example, suppose you play golf persistently. Should the "pro" tell you that your "follow through" is not good it might not disturb you. You might try to correct the habit and you might not. But suppose your doctor tells you that you must give up golf entirely, you are miserable. The habit of playing golf has created a "desire" to play golf. These habit-created desires are hard to control. And there are a lot more of them than you think. We desire to live in America; we prefer our own form of Government; we believe in our own church; we want to go on working in the future as in the past; and a thousand other things we want only because we are in the habit of having them.

“What causes desire to become active and lead to strong emotion is stimulation without outlet—it is the combination of the stirring up of the desire with the blocking of satisfaction”. In the case of the golf you probably did not realize the desire until the satisfaction of it was blocked. Or suppose you go to your boss with a new method which you think will save time. Then suppose the boss gives you a bawling-out and tells you you are supposed to do things according to standard and that he will tell you when he wants a standard changed. You are hurt, disappointed and angry. It affects all your work. It affects your understanding of what you read and what you hear. It affects your attitude toward others. It does all this not because you want it to, but because that is “human nature”. If you realize what is happening you may integrate conflicting emotions and prevent harm, but usually you do not realize.

But why all the emotion? First, there is your desire to accomplish, to do things, to improve the service. This is blocked. Then there is the desire to talk back to the boss and tell him where to get off. But this is blocked by the desire to hold your job. The emotional energy will pile up just as water behind a dam, and like water, will seek some other outlet. The energy is used to think up schemes to get even or figure out ways to compensate or other ways to satisfy balked desire. In this manner little things are of great importance in industry. In this case the blocking of desires could have been so easily avoided and the strength of the desired could have been directed toward furthering the ends of management instead of being turned against it.

However, there need not be anything of the personal feeling such as the above example included, to have practically the same antagonistic waste of energy. The trouble may start over some unimportant change in method, but the blocked habit, with the resultant fixation of attention may center all thought and action on the detail of method instead of the original objective. The method becomes an end in itself. By understanding the formation of habits and habit-desires and how to modify them, such difficulties and wastes of energy may be avoided. In addition there is the problem of handling conflicting desires, and of taking advantage of them and using them instead of letting them work harm to the organization.

Now as to the application of this, or part of it, to the trenching problem of White's paper: As I understand the argument, the Service unconsciously developed the habit of digging a trench around all fires whether they needed it or not. This came about gradually through the inspector over emphasizing the one tangible factor that he could see and measure. As the habit developed the trench assumed unjustifiable importance. This caused us to rationalize its strengths and weaknesses and this further overemphasized its value. The habit is now so firmly fixed that questioning it seems sacrilege. We unconsciously build up its defence, and strengthen it further by improving trenching methods and tools. Fire fighting and fire-line construction are almost synonymous terms. The habit objective has practically replaced the real accomplishment objective of putting the fire out.

No doubt I have overemphasized the application of this bit of human nature to this particular job. I hope that in doing so I have not prejudiced

you against its importance in working with men. You can yourself think of a number of better illustrations. Even if habit does or has played an important part in our trenching practices, there has not developed any antagonistic reactions against change of method and it doesn't seem to me that there is any probability that there will. If changes are desirable or needed they can be affected in accordance with natural laws and thereby without the shock or the struggle attendant upon forced but not understood change.

HANDBOOK ON PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT AND PROCEDURE

By Paul P. Pytchlynn; published by Region V.

I do not know what the distribution of this publication has been but I assume that there is at least one copy in each Regional library. It is suggested that you get a copy some time and look it over. If you do you will probably read every word. For it is interesting reading. You will find it helpful also. Its treatment of probation is particularly good.

SUGGESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

The article for discussion, on the use of the plow in fire fighting, is one that should be given careful consideration as well as discussion. The accusations made or suggested by White are both startling and discomfiting. Has this digging complex got us for sure? Or has White some other kind of complex?

As I get it, White's contention is something like this: Fire fighting is an intangible art difficult to define. It at times uses a trench from which to fight. Inspectors need something tangible that they can see and measure. They grabbed the trench, as the one tangible factor that stays put. They criticized it; they discussed it, they measured it; and when fires got away they looked for flaws in it. The effect on the workers was the natural one. They paid more attention to the trench. This developed into a habit. We unconsciously became trench diggers instead of fire fighters. As diggers we developed great skill and ingenuity. We invented new tools and developed new methods. Yet the fires continued to burn.

At a foreman conference I heard it said that many fires jumped over the trench to one that burned across it. When they jumped our trenches we dug them deeper. And the fires continued to jump. We dug trenches not for the fires but for the inspectors. If, after a fire got away, the trench was complete and standard for width and depth, o. k., but if there was one little gap of only a foot, the fire boss was responsible, and how alibi that? So when a fire jumps our trench through the air we dig the next one deeper into the ground.

However, there are conflicting instincts. Men want results. They are beginning to study the fire instead of the trench. How do fires burn? How do they travel? What makes them flare up and jump? Can we remove the flares? Can we in some manner check the fire and then put it out? The new men are talking about the technique of "fire fighting"; the old men still talk about "trenching". This is a transition period. Are we slipping or going forward? Not being a fire expert myself, you have got me all up in the air. I don't know. Who is going to set us right?

As to questions, I am almost afraid to ask any. It is a technical subject. You will grasp the problem more surely than I. As I get it, it is not so much the plow as it is the trench. Must all fires be completely encircled by a trench? If so, when should the trench be dug? Will you first check the spread of the fire and trench as needed as a part of mop-up or will you first trench and then give your attention to the fire?

QUESTIONS

1. The plow as compared to other trenching tools with particular reference to speed?

2. The time, place and purpose of the trench in fire fighting technique. Has it been over worked or over emphasized by inspectors? What is the right attitude toward the trench, in inspection?

3. White's opinions, a, b and c?

4. Mental attitude is important, so the psychologists tell us. How can we produce the right mental attitude, that attitude which uses a trench without overdoing it?

5. How can men be trained to determine whether there is any live fire in a fire edge before leaving it untrenched?

6. Are the questions here involved, of the nature and importance to justify an administrative study?

May we have your discussions by October 31?

DISCUSSIONS OF LESSON 9, THE EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT

It is certainly a great satisfaction to be able to publish for you such a well prepared, well balanced group of discussions as these papers on lesson 9. They seem to me to represent a lot of good hard thinking. I believe they will not only be read with interest but will be studied by every supervisor and executive assistant in the Service. They are worth study.

To be sure they do not all agree. In fact there is considerable difference in the viewpoint as well as views of the office and field men. All do agree, however, that the position must be adapted to the job. "The work must be done". The first step is to analyze all the work done at headquarters. Then plan and assign this work to the men available, making the best possible use of every man's time. This means, on most forests, that the executive assistant will do a considerable amount of clerical work. It may even mean at times that the supervisor will do some clerical work. Just what clerical jobs the executive assistant shall do is not so important. Some do bookkeeping; some prepare vouchers; some prepare statistical reports, and so on. On the other hand, some do little clerical work, but do considerable PR and assistant supervisor work.

Just what then, is the distinctive thing that all these officials should know and do? The office men all agree that they should bring to the job expert knowledge in accounting and office management. Accounting and office management are sciences just as much as range management is a science. In no other position does the organization provide for this class of service, so it should be provided here. It seems to me that they make a good case. From my own observation, there seems to be as much difference between a bookkeeper and an accountant as there is between a farmer and a silviculturalist. If we need the one expert we need the other. A few years ago a bookkeeper was just a bookkeeper; today the chief accountant is frequently a vice-president.

How many of you noticed the close tie-in between the first article reviewed in lesson 9 and the subject being discussed? In number 4 of that article, Dr. Donald says, "One of the greatest weaknesses is in the use of accounting data. A large part of the accountant's effort is wasted because executives do not understand and use accounting reports". Our office men say that our supervisors like these industrial executives need expert staff assistance in the interpretation and use of accounts records. In number 10 Donald says that too many cost records are mere inquests. I find the same idea in these discussions. In number 9, Donald emphasizes the importance of office management. These discussions remind us that office management is a science in which supervisors have not been trained and in which, therefore, they need expert staff assistance.

I am not saying that I agree fully with the office men, but I do say that they have made a good case, and that they seem to have considerable authoritative backing for their position. Where office records are expensive there should be expert advice in the use of records; where office work is relatively high the executive should have staff assistance in office manage-

ment. Does that not sound reasonable? If correct, the outstanding requirement in the selection of executive assistants should be that they qualify as experts in these two sciences. Do you agree?

In number 10 I said that all discussions received were published. It is humiliating to be forced to acknowledge that that statement was not true. Supervisor Humphrey sent in a discussion that reached here before publication. It came in while I was in the field, became attached to the back of another paper and was not found by me until too late. Say what you please about efficiency; I cannot help it now. P. K.

C. S. CHRISTENSEN

KOOTENAI

LIBBY, MONTANA

1. The position of Executive Assistant was created to give the Supervisor a staff assistant who would really "assist" the executive by taking over the office functions of the forest. It is just as important that the functions of accounting and office management be recognized as the sciences that they are and be delegated to a man who is trained in these sciences as it is that the functions of forest management or range management be delegated to men trained in those lines. The Supervisor must delegate as many of the various functions as possible to his staff members or he will become so bogged down with detail work himself as to interfere with his proper functioning as an executive.

In these days of reduced personnel, smaller appropriations and the need for greater efficiency in securing better results at lower costs, the Supervisor finds it necessary to make use of the best tools available. Proper estimates and budgets, current control of available funds, cost accounts and other reports that give "live" information rather than inquests at the end of the fiscal year are essential tools for the successful executive. In the Executive Assistant he has a man that is trained in the proper use of those tools. The division of work between the Supervisor and the Executive Assistant should be made at that point where the preparation of reports ends and the executive interpretation of them begins. The Executive Assistant should be charged with the assembling of the data, the preparation of the reports and the placing of them before the Supervisor in such a manner that he can readily determine the trends away from normal at a time when there is still time to correct things that are getting out of line. There is no reason why he should be burdened with reports that indicate normal functioning of the organization. The Executive Assistant can watch that phase and report to the Supervisor the abnormal trends and conditions for executive action.

The office end of the forest will not just run itself and do a satisfactory job of it. Some one man must be responsible for the work to see that the various jobs are coordinated and the work gets done. In assigning the functions of accounting and office management to the Executive Assistant he should be given complete charge over the office and be held responsible for the clerical work in the Supervisor's and Rangers' offices. As far as the clerical work and the interpretation of the guides and manuals in fiscal and accounts matters his instructions should carry the weight of the Supervisor's authority. He should be the Acting Supervisor while the

Supervisor and deputy are away from the office. It is he who can insure continuity to the job and see that everything is taken care of promptly. Matters of technical forestry nature that he cannot handle can be referred to a field man but the plan of having first one field man and then another act as Acting Supervisor while in the office tends to shift all of the responsibility onto the Supervisor. It is too easy to let things slide until the Supervisor returns.

The job should be primarily executive. Where the office is large and a number of clerks are employed the executive functions will require more time than in smaller offices with fewer clerks. Such time as is necessary to properly handle the executive functions should be provided and the balance of the time can be allotted to such tasks as the executive assistant can do better than the clerks. Such tasks should consist mainly of seasonal reports that come up at a time of the year when the Supervisor is in the office and the outside business of the forest is at a minimum.

2. Since the functions of accounting and office management are sciences that require much study and experience I think the first requirement is that the Executive Assistant be a good office man and trained in those lines. He should be familiar with field conditions in order to more intelligently deal with field members of the force and not burden them with a lot of fiscal requirements that can best be handled in the office. This experience can be gained by annual visits to the ranger districts to check property and work over the rangers' files and occasional visits to other camps and activities of the forest. Sitting in on the annual rangers' meeting and taking part in discussions helps a lot. The need for sufficient office experience and training is more essential than field experience on this job.

REX KING

CROOK

SAFFORD, ARIZONA

Two viewpoints are possible in considering the executive assistant. One is that the Supervisor should do all of the work which he has time to do and assign that which he does not have time to do to the executive assistant; the other is that he delegate everything to the executive assistant for which the latter has the time and ability to handle, thereby gaining as much slack time for himself as possible. Expansion of the work on a National Forest is in the way of thinking, or is the result of thinking. Moreover, cooperation and dealing with the public is such a delicate matter that it requires more study and thought than actual work. Thinking and studying is an indeterminate job, which can not be set up very definitely as recurrent work, and which can not ordinarily be delegated. Unless we assume that the National Forests need no more expansion or development work, it would seem to me that the best organization is to delegate as much of the recurrent or routine work to the executive assistant as possible, leaving as much freedom, both as to time and ways to the Supervisor and staff for that class of work.

Since the number of clerks, the volume of work, and the nature of the work varies so much on the various forests a discussion of the division of the work must be extremely general, so general in fact that it might be mis-

leading.

Leaving the academic discussion out, and considering the problem as applying to a specific forest, the natural thing to do is first to analyze the work. Since the executive job is a connecting link between the supervisory work and the purely clerical work, a clear picture of it may not be obtained when the clerical analysis and the supervisory analysis are made separate and distinct. Without analyses, the work hardly can be balanced and assigned intelligently. Moreover, the ability and personality of the executive assistant can then be taken into consideration. Our units are so small, that is, I mean the average forest has so few clerks that there is little lee-way in grouping of work and organization. It is more of a matter of adapting the job to the person, or vice versa. In most of the Supervisor's offices that I know about, the executive assistant *has* to handle the property accounts, vouchers, cost records, supplies, and similar work, which does not leave him with a very great amount of time for other work. Among the jobs which might be considered for delegating to him are:—the handling of most of the callers, the collection of fees, checking sales reports, check sheets, etc., handling the routine phases of certain classes of special uses, checking diaries against Form 26 and for correctness of charging to activities, general or project PR work, drafting and blue printing, compensation cases, etc.

On a large unit, or in an office where there are several clerks and where there is a chance for a higher degree of specialization and the property, voucher, and other work can be handled by a separate clerk, then the executive assistant job takes on a different complexion. He then is unquestionably a staff man with the distinction that nearly all of his time is spent in the office.

On the lighter forests the question might be raised that the job was that of a clerk rather than an executive assistant. It should be kept in mind however that even with the best laid plan it is impossible for the Supervisor or Assistant Supervisor to be in the office all of the time, and there must be someone in the office who is of a calibre to handle fires, emergency cases, etc. To do this necessitates a familiarity not only with the work, but of as much detail as possible of the many important jobs or cases on the forest. In actual administration, forests and case histories are far more important than appears from a theoretical consideration of forest administration. Even on a forest having two clerks the job is important, possibly as large and important as on a heavier forest, although in a somewhat different way.

I would eliminate from consideration at the very start the question of calling in rangers to handle executive assistant work or fill in jobs. As training for the ranger, it is excellent, but from the standpoint of the work it is expensive, much of the work has to be done over again, or else requires constant supervision, is the wrong psychology, is pretty apt to cause friction on the forest, and who is going to fill the ranger's job while he is gone, or if it doesn't have to be filled, then what is wrong there?

As to how to fill the executive assistant position—how to select a man for it—that is simple. Having analyzed the work on the forest, allo-

cated the various jobs to the executive assistant position, and having drawn up a job description for the position, then just pick the man who most nearly fits the job description. Of course this involves work, but it is not all chargeable to the selecting of an executive assistant. Having set up what the job is to be, and determined its elements then what traits will best fit a man for the job? What training is necessary? What are the physical requirements? The educational requirements—what skill is necessary? Is the typing, the accounting, the handling of property, taking care of callers, the heaviest or what percentage of each of these does the job consist of? How much repairing of tools and equipment will be necessary? What type of callers visit that particular office, are they tourists or are they stockmen, who have to be handled by the indirect subtle method that stockmen employ, or are they modern business people, or what?

Ordinarily I expect that you will find that on the average forest the largest requirement is for "office" skill.

I am not entirely clear as to what is meant by administrative experience. Apparently it means the result of having worked for the Forest Service in certain, but not always the same classes of job. Granted that it means such work as scaling logs, counting cattle, laying out recreational areas, inspecting summer homes, taking grazing applications, and other jobs of that sort, then it is doubtful if they are of very great value in developing skill in an executive assistant. They are unquestionably of great assistance in broadening the man, giving him poise and confidence, but that can come from other sources, for instance the job itself or else a clerical job. Some experience should not be belittled, but at the same time it should be kept in its true place.

Knowledge of the physiography, lines of travel, character of the forest users, etc., is of great assistance, but it is seldom that a man selected from a ranger district has knowledge of more than that one district, and experience can better be gained by the executive assistant by field trips after he is on the job. The proper conception of the difficulties of a ranger's work and the handicap under which he works is no doubt of assistance, and there is no question but what a man with a background and traditions at least similar to the forest, is more valuable than for instance a city-bred man, who would require much longer to absorb local conditions and the habit of thought of the local people.

Considering the various percentages of the different classes of work, field skill, or administrative experience, is less important than skill in accounts and office methods. Skill in "juggling" figures, etc., is far less spectacular than shoeing a horse, chopping down a tree, or rounding up cattle, etc., but hour for hour the former class of jobs are more important in a financial way to the Forest Service than are the latter, therefore they should be very carefully considered and properly paid for. When it comes to real knowledge and super-human memory efforts, the learning of all of the fiscal regulations, comptroller's decisions, and all of the other things which are necessary to get a voucher paid, it has all of the jobs beaten. It takes a real man to absorb it all. Punching cattle is no proper training for carrying on negotiation with a Regional Fiscal Agent. It might be interpo-

lated in passing, that to expect a Supervisor or a member of the staff to keep thoroughly posted on that line of work is poor business management and to expect the entire force to keep posted is to be disappointed.

In many ways the executive assistant job is one of the most highly specialized in the service, although at first sight it might appear as merely a stop gap or a filler-in. Perhaps the reason why the job has been misunderstood in the past, and has been disappointing in many instances, is because that it has been looked upon from that point of view.

Ordinarily an executive assistant is more apt to be familiar with cases and the work of the forest as a whole, than is a deputy who spends a large part of his time in the field, and therefore misses many of the cases. That is, he would be if the executive assistant read all mail and kept up on all cases. Whether he should do this or not would probably start an argument. If the executive assistant handles only routine work, then he is not an executive assistant. As a matter of fact the place is bound to have executive responsibility. In handling property and accounts he must to be effective, have more or less authority. If the Supervisor, as shown by the analysis has time to handle routine and minor executive work, then something is wrong. A supervisor's time is expensive and it is a poor outlay of money to have him even try, unless of course the load is very light, in which case we would naturally expect to cut first on the deputy.

In your review of the paper "The Way Out for Your Business" you did not comment on Number 2. Isn't the budgeting of our time rather important? In fact isn't it one of the most important possibilities we have?

And what about No. 8—Isn't there room for improvement in the way our allotments are subdivided? Should there not be greater flexibility in them?

I, for one, agree that No. 11 should be seriously considered by the Forest Service. For one thing there should be more inter-forest contacts. There is of course a second hand contact by way of Regional Office inspection, but it does not take the place of and have all of the advantages of direct contact.

L. W. HESS

CORONADO

TUCSON, ARIZONA

The executive assistant position belongs to the supervisor's headquarters and his duties should be so confined. He should go out on the forest enough to maintain a contact with the field and to have a general idea of what is going on on the ground. Two or three weeks per year is probably enough for this but there can be no hard and fast rule applying to all forests. He should not make a practice of doing field work to any extent. If he has time for this it appears self-evident that there are too many clerical positions on that forest and one of them should be dropped or placed on a part time basis. Exception to this might be in a combined assistant supervisor-executive assistant position but I believe these are rather rare.

Granted that the executive assistant is primarily an office man and his work is at the forest headquarters, we next come to define in detail his duties and here we find that these vary so much on the different forests and even

during different periods on the same forest that it is impossible to give a detailed definition that would fit any considerable number of forests. In fact one of the chief characteristics of a good executive assistant is his adaptability and the ease with which he meets the various situations that arise; his ability to assume greater responsibility and his disposition to do the minor routine jobs as they fall to his lot.

It is necessary for each supervisor to determine the duties of this position on his forest and in doing this he must consider, not only the executive assistant job, but how it fits in with his own job and the job of everyone else connected with the office so that the result is to produce an efficient and smooth running unit. The fact that the executive assistant's salary rate is \$1.00 or more per hour is of secondary importance. In the small offices on forests, work cannot be assigned solely by salary grades. There is not enough office-boy and other low grade work to justify such employees, yet there is quite a lot of work of these various kinds that has to be done. It should be so assigned that it will be least burdensome, considering the entire office. Right here I want to emphasize the necessity of maintaining a well balanced plan for the office as a whole into which the executive assistant fits to the best advantage. His job should not be out of proportion to the rest of the picture, neither too large nor too small.

I am listing below some of the questions to be considered in outlining an executive assistant's duties on a forest.

To what extent should financial control, procurement of supplies, etc., be delegated to him? He should be qualified to assume practically full responsibility for these if good organization requires it.

Should he exercise detailed supervision over the work of the other clerks, or should each have his or her own duties and responsibilities which take up the major part of the time, with coordination only by the executive assistant to distribute peak loads and to take up slack time that might otherwise be lost? The latter is usually preferable, particularly since our clerical force is becoming more stable.

Is detailed personnel control in the office centered in the supervisor and assistant supervisor? If so, what part, if any, does the executive assistant have in it? For example, is the executive assistant consulted before applications for leave are approved? What happens when the supervisor and assistant supervisor are out of the office?

It is taken for granted that the supervisor and assistant supervisor may go to the field leaving the executive assistant as the sole forest officer in the headquarters town for periods of approximately two weeks at a time. He can usually get in communication with them with little or no delay in case something urgent comes up that he cannot, or should not, handle.

If the supervisor passes on to the executive assistant all the work the latter can handle and the executive assistant passes on likewise to the other clerks, will there be such an accumulation of lower grade work at the bottom of the ladder that another clerk will have to be employed to handle it? What will the supervisor and particularly the executive assistant do with the additional time they have made available for themselves? Of course it will be utilized. But some of it, maybe a large part, may go toward

expanding their jobs and developing work that is hardly justified, particularly in these days of economy. It is characteristic of ambitious government employees and organizations to over-develop. It is human nature and the Forest Service is not immune from it. Also it is something that the taxpayers are thinking about right now. What would they say of a number of clerks in a small town supervisor's office?

In most supervisor's offices it is easy to be busy and yet not accomplish very much. Tact and good judgment in handling visitors and in dealing with other members of the office, with an unwritten plan for each day's work in the back of one's head and a stubborn persistence in sticking to it, are necessary if much real work is to be accomplished. Do not confuse administrative work with "being busy" and let real work suffer thereby.

An efficient clerical force in a forest office can turn out statistical reports that would stand up under the most exacting check and double check in the Regional Office. Furthermore, they can be turned out in considerable quantity; a sort of mass production at a relatively low unit cost. The executive assistant might sign them as acting supervisor, or, if the supervisor sees them at all it is just to sign hurriedly without studying them. He has explicit confidence in the executive assistant and his forest has a good record for reports. This is making reports an end in themselves. It is and always will be the case in the government service that reports are just an end in themselves for many of the employees who work on their preparation. But in the Forest Service we like to think that our reports are of some interest to forest executives and of some value in forest administration. To stimulate this, would it not be a good idea for the assistant supervisor to do some clerical work on forest statistics occasionally, or bring a ranger in on detail, or even for the supervisor to try his hand at it? Of course it would be more costly and the columns of figures might not total quite the same vertically and horizontally but would there not be a benefit from it that cannot be measured in dollars and cents?

To what extent can the executive assistant engage in public relations work?

Is there enough fire business to warrant the employment of a fire dispatcher, or can the executive assistant do this? He should be qualified for it. The question is the volume of work.

If there is only a small amount of field equipment at headquarters, it is ordinarily part of the executive assistant's job to look after it. If, however, there is a rather active warehouse, it may be necessary, because of the volume of work, to make other arrangements which may, or may not be under the supervision of the executive assistant.

On some forests an executive assistant may do very little typing book-keeping, or similar work. On other forests good organization may require that he do a great deal of it.

At various times some one raises the question as to whether an executive assistant should have had field experience. My opinion is that field experience is of value but is not necessary. Only a very few field men would make good executive assistants and be content with the job. It requires office training and a liking for office work that the average field

man does not have. It is confining and a large part of it is just plain hard work over a desk. It is not a job for a man with an urge for the great open spaces, or for any other kind of a far-away urge. There is a possibility that a field man would become just a good handy man around the forest headquarters instead of a real executive assistant. There is a difference.

As I have already stated, the executive assistant must be adaptable. This, with occasional field trips and associations with field men, is ordinarily sufficient without actual field experience. Of course, a strictly office man who is afraid of getting his hands dirty and whose vision of his job is limited to the four walls of the office would not be at all satisfactory.

As to training, I believe this can best be accomplished by the supervisor and assistant supervisor giving the trainee a little special attention with a definite object in view, passing responsibility to him as he is able to take it on, and making him feel that they have an interest in his work, particularly the results he gets. Do not treat him indifferently, letting him stumble around aimlessly and do as best he can under the circumstances the jobs that are loaded onto him. Service on two or three forests, advancing from the light duty to the heavy duty, is good experience.

LEE P. BROWN

OLYMPIC

OLYMPIA, WASHINGTON

My first reaction to Blood's article was one of, "He is 100 per cent right, his questions are all pertinent." Upon later thought and reconsideration of his article, I think his questions still pertinent, but I don't think him 100 per cent right.

My opinion is that the Executive Assistant's position is clerical. First and second it is supervisory and advisory. In my opinion, an executive assistant is in the nature of a good private secretary. The private secretary of the manager of a large corporation takes care of correspondence, prepares reports,, and in many cases acts for the manager in his absence. A private secretary, depending on the importance of the position, may have one or more assistants. A chief clerk handles purely routine office work and directs the labors of a clerical force. In this work his work is largely supervisory, and very little is actually clerical. Let me illustrate: A power company operates here in the West in three states. It is a subsidiary of one of the few large power trusts or holding companies in the U. S. The manager of this company is one of the vice-presidents in the larger company. He has a private secretary who has two assistants. His work is in two phases; 1. As between the subsidiary and parent company, 2. As director of policy program and business management of the subsidiary company. In his absence from his headquarters one of the assistant secretaries may travel with him, while the assistant directs the routine of his office and carries on in his absence, even going so far as to direct and instruct district managers in routine matters, and in matters which are within his cognizance. The subsidiary company has a chief accountant who directs a staff of bookkeepers, prepares statements, etc.; a chief clerk who directs a staff of stenographers who are shifted from engineers, district managers and purchasing agent's offices as they are needed. In other words, the

chief accountant and chief clerk's jobs are supervisory and not clerical. The secretary's work is clerical, advisory and supervisory. Applying the same reasoning to the Supervisor's office, the average supervisor needs a secretary rather than a clerk. Unfortunately our terminology is at fault. Consequently some one devised the term of "Executive Assistant", which fills the bill nicely. As an administrative officer I would rather have one really competent and well trained executive assistant who could and would do stenographic and accounting work than two clerks or stenographers. As soon as he demonstrated his ability to me, he would handle routine mail and vouchers without referring them to me, except for such notation as was necessary to keep me informed so that I would keep administrative control, and I think that every Supervisor makes this effort subconsciously if not consciously. For example, what Supervisor keeps up on all the intricacies of the fiscal regulations? He knows them in a general way, and reads amendments but does he not depend on his office help to keep up to scratch in this matter, and keep him informed?

WALTER B. DILLON

TUSAYAN

WILLIAMS, ARIZONA

1. The whole tenor of both Blood's and your own comments center around what is theoretically termed an Executive Assistant, but which in practice under our limited powers (by "our" I mean the Service) is more of a clerical than an executive position. And that is not meant as a reflection on any Supervisor in the sense that he does not delegate executive powers to one who is acknowledgely capable of assuming them.

The limitation is enjoined on us by the nature of our organization. If our personnel were as flexible as that of a comparable business of a magnitude as great as ours, we would better be able to place the Executive Assistant in the somewhat exalted position that the tentative classification puts him. But the rigidity of the Civil Service requirements precludes that and I see no way at present of gaining elasticity without losing the very valuable safeguards that Civil Service regulations throw around us.

We cannot, therefore, trim our personnel to fit the varying conditions existing on the several Forests, but must perforce somewhat arbitrarily place men more according to their ability than to the requirements of a particular job. Should the exigency require that a man coming under the tentative classification of an Executive Assistant be held on a job requiring only the ability of an ordinary Forest Clerk, one of two things must happen: either we will under pay him and perhaps lose him, or will overpay him on a job not up to his ability.

The first premise I would lay down, then, is this: build our organization in such a manner that when we have developed a man of Executive Assistant caliber that we will be able, under average conditions, to place him on a Forest requiring an Executive Assistant. This cannot always be done, granted, since opportunity does not usually and conveniently knock when and where we want it to, but I do believe we can build flexibly enough so that we need not lose such a man before we can find the right place for him.

Granting that the average Clerk can be developed into an Executive

Assistant, my second premise would be that the bars be let down so that the Executive Assistant may be promoted to Assistant Supervisor, or at least that the position be classed as co-equal to an Assistant Supervisor.

Third, the above two premises granted, an Executive Assistant then becomes in fact what the tentative classification describes him in theory.

Why an Assistant Supervisor in the first place? It is an acknowledgment that the work on a Forest is too much for the Supervisor. In that case we ask, in what department does the overload exist? If it is Forest Management, then we need a timber man; if in Range Management then we need a grazing man; but suppose the technical load is not too great but the resultant clerical work is more than he can handle, why not, then, a skilled accounts man? Call him an Executive Assistant or an Assistant Supervisor, what's the difference, but give him equal status.

No two Forests will likely bear the same load or class of load and the same Forest will from time to time vary in its load, but at no time should the Supervisor be required to carry any great portion of the clerical load. He is a technical man and his time should be given to technical matters insofar as our organization can be adapted to it. Additional staff men should be appointed strictly on the nature of the load with the full understanding that a good extra Clerk is much cheaper than a trained man either in what we loosely term technical work or in professional work like accounting.

2. Now for the question as to "field" experience for an Executive Assistant. Such experience may be helpful as a perspective but not at all essential. But accounting experience is very essential. No man should be taken into the Service without a thorough groundwork of accountancy if he is to be expected to some day fill the job of an Executive Assistant. He will never make other than a good first clerk.

And the obverse is true. Any attempt to make an Executive Assistant of a Ranger who has not had accounting experience is merely throwing a monkey wrench into the gears of our accounting organization. As well try to place the best of accountants in a position calling for a trained silviculturist.

3. The best possible training is first, theoretical in the school, and then practical on the job. Bookkeeping is theoretical accounting but of little value until applied under varying and trying conditions. Many "book or record keepers" go along in a rut for years, but a very few, comparatively, develop into first class accountants. However, under the right kind of leadership many more could and would be developed.

The elasticity we need in the Service is easily obtainable by the floater method. We cannot expect to take a green man and place him on a Forest, even the lowest class of Forest, and have him develop suddenly into a first class Clerk, much less an Executive Assistant. The new man may have to remain on that Forest for years or may develop in a year or two. With a floater we will be able to fill in during vacations, details, etc., and at the same time train him in every branch of the Service.

But a still better way might be to add a "costs" man to the Fiscal Agent personnel since it is apparent that if we develop costs much further such a man will be required, and let him act as trainer on the Forest and as

assistant to the Supervisor in the proper use of the costs as evolved. Such a position should be almost wholly a travelling one as very little Regional Office work would be involved. But any method that will allow for elasticity will do.

Summing up: I do not believe that Supervisors consciously slight the Clerk or Executive Assistant. It is simply that these positions have never been accorded the consideration they deserve. Strictly clerical work, not of a supervisory or executive character, should not be performed either by a Supervisor or an Executive Assistant if there is enough executive or supervisory work to occupy their full time.

I am not in sympathy with the idea that a Government job should be a sinecure. On the other hand, I am not in accord with the usual businessman's idea that an employe should be occupied every moment of his working time. That kind of an employe is never of any value to the employer since he does not have time to develop initiative and inevitably becomes a menace to the organization through slow but sure virus of antagonism to the grind.

A happy medium where every man in the Service is on his toes, with plenty to do, and enough slack so that the lines may be tightened during emergencies, is the ideal organization. Frankly, I am afraid we have too much slack in nearly every Department. I would much prefer to have my time fully occupied than to have too much idle time, and I believe that is the attitude of every thoughtful worker regardless of position in the Service.

Let the position and not the man determine whether a Clerk, Chief Clerk or Executive Assistant is needed. We may lose some good men because we do not have room enough at the top always, but with positions filled and duties performed in like ratio I believe the stability of a Government job will eventually draw to the Federal Government the class of men we wish to attract. It did with me and I am not very easy to please. And while the pay is not exactly satisfactory according to business wage or salary standards, good men will take such a pride in their work that the average salary will adjust itself to a fair comparison in due time.

The recent decision opening to an accountant, for example, in the Forest Service, a higher grade accounting position in some other Bureau or Department, is a step in the right direction. Therefore, such a position had to be filled by a new examination if there were no eligibles, and an entirely new man brought into Government work with the resultant necessity for training. Lack of elasticity again. That always "got my goat". Now, we can fill the position from within and start a new man at the bottom in a lesser position.

That also brings me a thought. Why not develop a sort of seniority list based on both age of service and ability to the end that all Government work will be codified and inter-Departmental transfers made easy for the good of the entire Federal Service? That is a job for the Personnel Board and the Civil Service Commission, but there is no need for the Forest Service to wait for them.

There will be greater opportunities for the really good men and there-

for greater incentive for really good men to enter Government service.

SAM R. BROADBENT

CHOCTAWHATCHEE

PENSACOLA, FLORIDA

After reading the lesson it appears that the term "administrative work" is used rather indiscriminately. Virtually all work involved in connection with the administration of a National Forest can be classed as administrative or executive. It all cannot be indiscriminately rated as one. There is some of each.

For my part I would very much appreciate having an executive assistant who would do everything, except decide on matters of general policy and personnel. In most cases general policies for a Forest, as well as personnel matters, are subject to the approval of the Regional Forester, and this would leave me time to think between fishing trips.

I believe that there is a good deal of confusion existing relative to the executive assistant position. The title itself is in many cases a misnomer. An executive assistant on many Forests cannot be classed as an executive assistant, or perhaps an executive officer as the term is used in connection with Army and Navy organization, or the organization that exists in many private enterprises.

Some time ago I was assigned to a Forest which consisted of three Ranger Districts and an extra area that was administered by a guard on a ten months basis. The office force consisted of myself and an executive assistant. In this case, which I will admit does not perhaps exist now, it was necessary for the Supervisor and the chief clerk, or executive assistant, to divide the work and get it done. The Manual definition of the duties of the executive assistant didn't mean very much to us.

Broadly, the executive assistant job may be defined, but in the final analysis it is up to the Supervisor to see that jobs are accomplished; that work is completed even if it requires that the "executive assistant" do a little typing now and then. Personally I have always believed that the term "executive assistant" as a title is the "bunk", for after all the position is that of a "chief clerk", and the duties involved cannot always be definitely stated to apply to every Forest in the United States. In many cases the job description as given in the Manual or as written up for the Personnel Classification Board, takes in a little too much territory. If a man is given the job of describing his position it is only natural that he make it the most important position in the outfit. On the other hand it is realized that one Supervisor might organize his office on a different basis from another.

Jobs in various Forest offices can be standardized to a certain extent, but this is more the function of the Regional office rather than the Supervisor. If each Supervisor followed his own ideas, dictates, and wishes, rather than standard practice, I am sure that we would find ourselves in many difficulties. I do not believe the Supervisor should lose control of the work in his office—if he does it often happens that the first clerk pushes off jobs which he does not like to the second clerk. In the end many details are not accomplished.

I fully agree with the statement that "an executive assistant" or "chief clerk" who is familiar with the general idea of all field jobs is better fitted than one who is not. The question of training a clerk in both field and office procedure would require a great deal of thought and study. I believe that Mr. Blood has in mind an executive officer who would function for a Forest in the same manner as an executive officer functions at an Army Post, Navy Post, or on a battleship. The executive officer in these jobs works up from the bottom and is familiar with all of the work in the unit. Such a job would be comparable to an Assistant Supervisor who is not assigned to one or two activities on a given Forest, such as fire, grazing, or timber sales. This would mean a general revamping of our organization and increased personnel. I do not argue against such a step, in fact I believe it would be most advantageous—but try and get it.

MILTON R. SCOTT

SAN JUAN

DURANGO, COLORADO

It has been brought out several times that forests are different and that the work on forests differs and varies. This same set of differences certainly apply to our supervisors. It is only natural that each supervisor will handle his forest a little different. However, the little differences will not cause any trouble if we stick to and work out the big differences.

I have had the opportunity to work on four different national forests and I have found in each case that quite a volume of work was being handled by the supervisor, deputy supervisor or technical assistant, which could just as well have been handled by the executive assistant. This work and the amount of it varied with the forest. However, this practice should not necessarily be condemned for there may be times when a man's job does not keep him busily engaged and he can well help out with other work. The condemnation comes in having a man trained along say field lines doing office work "on his own" when he should be assigned such tasks and be supervised by the office-trained man, or vice versa.

Every organization or business must have a head. Without it the business would be in the same category as an automobile without a steering wheel. However, in the case of our forests, there is (in the average case) not sufficient straight supervising and planning work to be done to take all of the supervisors time so he takes on other work to fill in. On the other hand he cannot do all the work there is to be done so he must delegate the large portion of it to others. The supervisor is a field-trained man and with human nature working as it usually does he naturally has more confidence in another field-trained man than he does with one who is trained for something dissimilar, such as office work. However, I believe the average Supervisor would, if given the opportunity, turn over all the so-called office work to an office-trained man and all the field work to a field-trained man. The work is as different as day and night, and the basic training for such work is as different as day and night so why try to mix them? The trained forester is not only trained in forestry but in many allied lines. The same holds true with the office-man. A trained office man is not only trained in adding figures or keeping books but is trained also in many allied lines such as office management, organization, cost

accounting, etc.

The office assistant going into the field for some work, whether it be fire suppression or other work, is considered to be working under a handicap due to lack of experience, and would be put under the supervision of a field-trained man. Why not then, put the field-trained man under the supervision of the office assistant when he is doing office work? A good example of this would be the case of a ranger assigned to the supervisor's office during a part of the winter months. Should he have certain specified jobs picked out for him to do and work as an independent personage or should **he be placed** under the supervision of the office assistant and assigned such work as conform with the plan the office is being run under? Why have a ranger or other field man working on some report or plan for which there is no immediate rush while the balance of the office force is struggling **along trying to get out some rush work?**

This is not meant as a basis of determining who is "boss" and who is not. It is simply an attempt to make someone responsible for work which he is capable of handling to the best advantage.

During the past few years we have raised our sights considerably as regards the qualifications for a field man. He must have certain basis education or experience. However, in the case of office men we are still hiring "clerks". As a result we would be handicapped in some instances in securing an office assistant but it could be done and men who were not capable of taking over the job could be trained to it. It is best to remember, though, that you can't take a stenographer and expect him to become a first rate office manager and accountant and cost accountant in a couple of years. Basic training plus experience is paramount.

Keplinger takes a deserved slam at the practice of having first one "acting" and then another. It really is absurd to ask a supervisor, just returning from a field trip, to sign a whole batch of letters, vouchers, etc. which he doesn't know anything about and hasn't time to check up on. This practice also has a bad influence on the recipients of the mail since, if they make a call at the office as a result of the letter, they naturally think that no one can do anything for them except the Supervisor because he happened to be in the office that day and signed the letter. I don't advocate allowing everyone to sign but I do believe the man responsible for that work should sign.

To sum up my discussion I would say that being an executive assistant myself I suppose I am prejudiced against anything and everything but another executive assistant. However, trying to be as fair as I can I really believe that a forest run with the supervisor as the head, with a field-trained man in charge and responsible for all field work except that handled by the Supervisor, and with an office assistant in charge and responsible for **all the work** in the office except that handled by the Supervisor (and except the office work such as inspecting memorandums, and other reports which represent the writing down of results of a field trip and which would certainly be considered as a part of the field work just as much as though they were prepared while the officer was still in the field) we would have at least a working model of organization. AND speaking of an executive

assistant having all the 7 primitive senses, I would go farther and say that if such an organization were followed, the three men filling the positions mentioned would form a "board of directors" for discussing ways and means for carrying on the work of the forest which would be hard to beat.

KARL L. JANOUGH

CRATER

MEDFORD, OREGON

1. Blood's quotation from "Tentative Class Descriptions of National Forest Positions" can well serve as a basis for determination of what jobs should be delegated to the Executive Assistant, assuming, of course, that the Executive Assistant is qualified to handle the work. If the Supervisor thinks his Executive Assistant is not qualified, a course of training is necessary and as soon as the Executive Assistant becomes qualified, he should immediately be given the added responsibility. However, it should not be assumed that the Executive Assistant lacks or has the qualifications but his ability should be determined by the test method usually applied in the final stages of teaching or training. Regardless of how far this scheme is carried out, there will always be a common ground between the Supervisor and the Executive Assistant, for the reason that new conditions present themselves. But the common ground can be held down to small limits if, when a new condition arises, the two officers work together and share the job involved. A liberal delegation of jobs by the Supervisor is absolutely necessary if he fulfils his duties, as outlined in the Manual, with the greatest possible success. I believe that I know a few Administrative Officers who will say that this sounds good and easy on paper but it cannot be done. How do they know? Have they tried to delegate many of the jobs they are now assuming as their responsibility? Have they tested their Executive Assistant's ability and found by actual and repeated tests that he is incapable and could not be trained? Or have they assumed an error or lack of display on the part of the Executive Assistant to be final and absolute proof of their conviction? Lack of patience and confidence and human interest many times results in hasty and false convictions.

P. K. asks "If he (Supervisor) has not time (to do it all), is it best to delegate it (office work) to field assistants***?" Assuming that the Supervisor has not the time because his "market" needs improving along Recreation, Fire Control, Public Sentiment, etc., etc., lines and that his field assistants must spend more time on improvement of management and control, both of which are true on every National Forest, the answer is evident. I cannot picture a National Forest where much essential field work does not "wait" accomplishment because of "lack of time and personnel." Can you? Then this condition proves the desirability of delegation of all possible office work to the Executive Assistant within reasonable controlling limits.

2. Field experience is not necessary for an Executive Assistant to learn field conditions sufficiently to carry on his job with reasonable efficiency. However, a good knowledge (not necessarily complete) must be had and this can be secured by field trips with the Supervisor or his qualified assistant specifically made for training purposes. Also, actual

property inventory and ranger office inspection trips which should ordinarily be made by the Executive Assistant will quickly bring him in touch with field problems and a good knowledge of them will result.

3. I believe that progressively giving a chief clerk additional responsibilities is a good method of development for an Executive Assistant job. In fact, the method of developing an Executive Assistant should not vary from the method of developing any other administrative officer. I have watched the development of two clerical officers from the beginning to their present positions and assisted in their training as clerks. One of these men is a Deputy Fiscal Agent and the other is an Administrative Assistant at a large Forest Experiment Station. I am sure that both these men would say that their rapid advancement resulted from being trained by the above method. They certainly were granted the opportunity to assume all the responsibility they could carry and thereby relieve the Supervisor of a great amount of work. It is a natural desire of a man or woman to be given an opportunity to assume duties of higher positions to qualify for advancement, and this being true self training results as these opportunities are granted, and development progresses with less effort on the part of the Supervisor.

OLIVE LEAF

DEERLODGE

BUTTE, MONTANA

1. Your division of work or the shifting of the load of work between a supervisor and an executive assistant will depend wholly on the individuals filling these positions. Granting a fully qualified person holds the position of executive assistant what type of man is in the supervisor's chair. Is he one that will delegate work and authority to his executive assistant, or is he one who demands that minute details be passed over his desk? If such is the case your executive assistant no matter how capable is handicapped.

On the other hand if both parties are fully qualified a supervisor will automatically shift work to his executive assistant, and an executive assistant will endeavor to anticipate work, accomplish same, to relieve his supervisor.

2. Clerical training and experience are far more essential to the office of executive assistant than field experience though a combination would be ideal in times of emergency. Your executive assistant is manager of the office and as such he should thoroughly know his job. In knowing this job he would have to be informed on field conditions and practices, but I would not say field experience was essential.

3. The best method of developing a chief clerk into an executive assistant is to have the supervisor take him into his confidence; picture the problems to be met, make him feel that he has a certain part to play in the organization and administration of the forest, ask him his views on problems. Delegate minor administrative duties and as these are redeemed delegate more until he can assume the maximum amount of work and authority which the supervisor wishes to give him.

I have read the discussion of Mr. Roy H. Blood on the duties of an Executive Assistant with a great deal of interest and as I do not have the "Executive Management" discussions between Mr. Keplinger and the Supervisors available. I am going to just itemize a few points concerning the job with which I am familiar.

There are many jobs on a Forest which the Supervisor could delegate to his Executive Assistant and probably would if this part of the personnel was not usually short-handed. I believe the larger percentage of the forests are in the same position and therefore, it is impossible for the usual two members of the clerical force to handle everything on a forest of a clerical nature and still leave time for the Executive Assistant to handle, in addition, those jobs naturally belonging to an assistant of this character. The actual work is not all that is expected of the Executive Assistant. He is also supposed to have the regulations rather thoroughly in mind for all classes of work as well as the Fiscal and Administrative regulations. It has been my experience that if the desired information can be secured from the Executive Assistant without reading the regulations that this is the course which is followed by practically all of the other personnel on the forest.

I believe that the executive assistant on the forest should be considered as a staff officer and if the positions on a forest were listed I believe this position should be listed next to the Assistant Supervisor for the reason that any other staff position could, if desired, be split up and turned over to each of the district rangers. The executive assistant position is one which requires a man possessing the ability of keeping a set of books and having a knowledge of the field work. He must also have a pleasing personality in order to meet visitors in the office. Therefore, this job could not be delegated to any other assistant unless he had these qualifications. I consider this job as one of the most important on the Forest and could not be dispensed with if the duties of Senior Clerk and Executive Assistant are intermingled as they are at the present time on all of the forests of which I have actual knowledge.

The executive assistant is always ready to assume additional responsibility and I believe that he should be held responsible for the headquarters office of the forest at all times during the absence of the Supervisor and Assistant Supervisor. All of the other staff men are responsible for only one certain phase of the work and are not, therefore, in a position to pass on all other parts of the forest work as they usually do not pay much attention to these other classes until they are left in charge of the headquarters as Acting. I think that during the absence of the Supervisor or Assistant Supervisor that the executive assistant should be in charge and Acting as he is next to these officers in having a general knowledge of the forest work. Usually when questions come up for settlement while the field going men are Acting the executive assistant is called on for a decision as the field men are not familiar with the general forest work in sufficient detail to make them want to assume the responsibility for the decision. This happens in a number of cases and should the executive assistant make the wrong

decision for them they will invariably state that so-and-so told them to do it that way.

HELEN C. PAYNE

SALMON

SALMON, IDAHO

1. The use made of the position will depend upon the Supervisor, the amount of work there is and the number of assistant supervisors or technical assistants assigned to the forest. In my opinion, a Supervisor will delegate all the responsibility of routine jobs that he can. I can't imagine a Supervisor, with an executive assistant in the organization, handling all routine mail, vouchers, ordering, etc. The amount of executive work that he will delegate depends, of course, upon his confidence in the executive assistant. The Supervisor should turn over certain branches of the office work to the executive assistant, who, in turn plans his office management so that he will not be tied down to petty jobs that a lower salaried assistant should do. There should be a complete understanding between the executive assistant and his Supervisor of the direct responsibilities of the former. An ideal arrangement (or so it seems to me) would be for the executive assistant to be the office helper of the Supervisor and the Assistant Supervisors or Technical Assistant to be the field assistants. This couldn't be a hard or fast rule or arrangement and, of course, there will be times when there will be an overlapping. The amount of real executive work that the executive assistant can do will depend too, upon the amount of clerical help furnished him; whether the assistant clerk positions are considered merely training positions with a resultant periodic change of assistant clerks, or, whether we may assume that the executive assistant is given clerical help that will be more or less permanent.

2. An excellent idea. An executive assistant who has been around and who has an idea of the job requirements outside the office of the ranger will be better able to assume responsibility and help the rangers and other field men in formulating plans for their reports and routine work. It seems to me that an individual plan of how to give each executive assistant or aspirant to this position the necessary field training would have to be made for each case. Two years work out on the forest should help a great deal and be worth the investment.

3. The Supervisor should first acquaint the executive assistant with his responsibilities. Because the Supervisor has had the benefit of years of experience he can do a great deal to help the executive assistant in becoming more efficient. He knows how things should be done to make field work easier and more efficient and by giving the executive assistant the benefit of his knowledge and experience he will relieve himself of responsibilities and will be taking a step in the right direction in training someone who will become a real help to him. Any wide awake executive assistant can make himself more indispensable to his Supervisor if it is his desire to do so. When the Supervisor comes to depend greatly upon his "office helpers" the delegation of more authority and of more real executive jobs will follow.

